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INDEX:

- (1) Personal network of Shinzo Abe (Part 2): Foreign and security policies; Yachi suggests changing interpretation of the Constitution; Builds relationship of trust over abduction issue
- (2) Study of Shinzo Abe (Part 2): Searches for ways to achieve harmony with China behind scenes; "Fighting diplomacy" shifting
- (3) Bush-Koizumi honeymoon alliance (Part 1): Interview with Japan Research Institute Chairman Jitsuro Terashima: Japan blindly following US, without thinking and only out of force of habit
- (4) US told Japan it would not be asked to pay war cost, three months before the start of Iraq war

ARTICLES:

- (1) Personal network of Shinzo Abe (Part 2): Foreign and security policies; Yachi suggests changing interpretation of the Constitution; Builds relationship of trust over abduction issue

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Slightly abridged)
August 30, 2006

Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi (entered the ministry in 1969) this spring invited Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe over to his ministry and the two discussed a wide range of issues, including a change in the government's interpretation of the use of the right to collective defense, as well as a cut in defense

spending. Attending the session includes Hisahiko Okazaki, international affairs analyst and former ambassador to Thailand; Central Japan Railway Co. Chairman Yoshiyuki Kasai; and Osaka University Graduate School Prof. Kazuya Sakamoto, an expert on the Japan-US alliance.

Yachi and Akitaka Saiki, now minister at the embassy in Washington, are regarded as the two foreign ministry officials with the closest ties to Abe. The three have deepened their relationship of trust in dealing with the issue of abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korea. Yachi told his aides about the inside of the Koizumi government: "At first Mr. Abe was isolated on the North Korea issue. We had to prevent him from being embarrassed."

The long cherished dream of Yachi, a leading advocate of upholding and developing the Japan-US alliance, is to get the government to change its interpretation to allow Japan the use of the right to collective defense. In 2001, soon after the Koizumi government was launched, Yachi, then the Foreign Policy Bureau chief, met secretly at a Washington hotel with then Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly and the National Security Council's then Senior Director for Asian Affairs Torkel Patterson. Yachi told them: "The Japanese government will work to change its interpretation of the right of collective defense. We would like to put an end to the issue as early as possible." Kelly replied: "I really want you to do so. Although it seems a little late, I would like to see Japan put every effort into it." Yachi assured Kelly: "We cannot talk about the issue openly now. We will do it quietly. I want you to understand."

Five years later, Shinzo Abe is now eager to change the government's interpretation of the Constitution to allow Japan to exercise the right to self-defense.

TOKYO 00004966 002 OF 008

Abe clearly stated in a speech in Toyama City on Aug. 26, "The Japan-US alliance is the basis of Japan's foreign and defense policies."

A "hotline" set up between Abe and National Security Advisor Steve Hadley after North Korea test fire missiles on July 5 has drawn attention. Saiki was the one who let Hadley know Abe's cell phone number. The Abe-Hadley hotline worked well during a fierce battle in the United Nations Security Council over how to deal with Pyongyang after the missile launches.

Senior Foreign Ministry officials view Hadley and US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer as the key members of Abe's personal network in the US administration. Schieffer, a native of Texas, is a good friend of President George W. Bush. They jointly owned the Major League baseball club Texas Rangers.

Hadley enjoys the confidence of the president and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Some have noted that Abe's idea of creating a Japanese version of the National Security Council stems from his friendship with Hadley and Deputy Security Advisor Jack D. Crouch.

Japanese Ambassador to the US Ryozo Kato also supports Abe's efforts to build personal networks in Washington. Kato has communication channels to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

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Former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, Abe's grandfather, revised the Japan-US Security Treaty over strong opposition within Japan in 1960 when Abe was five years old. Kishi said, "It will take 50 years for the revised treaty to be appreciated." The revised treaty will celebrate its 50th anniversary four years from now. How will Abe develop his diplomacy that gives priority to the United States?

(2) Study of Shinzo Abe (Part 2): Searches for ways to achieve harmony with China behind scenes; "Fighting diplomacy" shifting

The July 17 issue of the People's Daily, the Chinese Communist Party's organ paper, reported on a meeting held four days earlier at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) between Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and over 10 Chinese research institute heads and Foreign Ministry officials responsible for Asian affairs.

Only the People's Daily reporters were allowed to be present at the meeting, as it was not announced to the Japanese media.

A mid-level lawmaker close to Abe explained such an arrangement this way:

"It's all right for Japanese people to describe Abe as being anti-China. But there would be trouble if the Chinese people labeled him as anti-China. That's why only the People's Daily reporters were allowed to cover the meeting and take photos."

At the meeting, a Chinese attendee said regarding regional gaps in China: "China's capabilities must not be underestimated." In response, Abe said: "Japan-China relations are inseparable. I don't want to destroy the ties."

The two sides exchanged views for about 30 minutes, in which Abe

TOKYO 00004966 003 OF 008

repeatedly underlined the importance of Japan-China relations. "Mr. Abe has softened his stance toward China, and China has sensed it," a Japanese official who had attended the meeting explained.

All contacts between the top leaders of the two countries have ceased due to Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. It is the largest negative legacy of the Koizumi administration. It has weighed heavily on Abe, who is known as a leading hawk on China and has maintained a "fighting diplomacy" in dealing with the North Korean abduction issue and other issues.

In late July, a lawmaker close to Abe called him to offer this advice: "A Japan-China summit must be held early, for that will be key to launching an Abe administration."

The lawmaker had just visited China in mid-July and held talks with senior Chinese government and communist party members. "Mr. Abe seemed to be considering my advice seriously, and that was a big change."

Separation of politics from economics is Abe's belief. On July 20, days before receiving the call, Abe delivered a speech in which he said this regarding Japan's relations with China:

"Economic relations must not deteriorate because of political issues. Political goals must not be achieved by cashing in on economic ties. Economic harassment must not be conducted. It is important to establish such principles."

Abe's tone has begun to show signs of change.

At the annual Tokyo-Beijing Forum, held in Tokyo on Aug. 3, Abe told Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi:

"Japan-China relations must be raised to a higher level by letting politics and economics serve as the two wheels of a cart."

China reacted positively to Abe's call to improve bilateral relations on the political front.

On Aug. 18, the Chinese Foreign Ministry released a statement saying that Tokyo and Beijing must work hard to set the stage for a Japan-China summit. This surprised a Japan-China relations source in Beijing. "Beijing repeatedly pressed Tokyo to change its posture. In an apparent reversal of such a stance, China has now called for mutual efforts."

LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Hidenao Nakagawa, who is close to Abe, also provided "protective fire." Nakagawa delivered a speech on Aug. 24 in which he said:

"If the top Japanese and Chinese leaders can hold a summit on the sidelines of the APEC CEO Summit in November, that would serve Japan's interests."

This was followed by the LDP block convention, held on Aug. 26 in Toyama City, in which Abe expressed his eagerness to build mature relations with China.

Abe also wants to improve relations with South Korea. On Aug. 9, Abe told visiting South Korean Foreign and Trade Minister Ban Ki Moon: "Japan must always be humble when it comes to the historical issue." Two days later, Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyasu

TOKYO 00004966 004 OF 008

Ando and others were sent to Seoul. The purpose was to strengthen communication channels to the South Korean president's office, commonly called the Blue House. Japanese officials can sense South Korea's desire to get along well with the next Japanese prime minister.

Abe, Beijing, and Seoul are all eager to mend relations with the establishment of a new Japanese government.

Even if a top-level meeting occurred, that would be only a starting point for Abe diplomacy.

In his book published recently, Abe criticized Japan's policy toward Asia:

"Japan has tried to please other countries. Such has been a standard approach in dealing with China and North Korea. In diplomacy, a message must be sent out first."

On the evening of Aug. 28, a meeting was held at LDP headquarters on the abduction issue. In the session, Abe said: "I believe it is most important for a lawmaker to fight for the country when it is in a fix."

As an example of his "fighting political" career, Abe cited the repatriation in October 2002 of five abductees, including Hitomi Soga. Abe decided not to return the five abductees to North Korea by squashing objections from Foreign Ministry officials, including then Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau Director-General Hitoshi Tanaka.

"Japan's foreign policy was called into question. Japan must conduct diplomacy in a way to take the leadership."

The abduction issue has paved the way for Abe to become the prime candidate to replace Koizumi.

In his speech in May, Abe analyzed his standing this way:

"Without public opinion surveys, I would not have been regarded as an LDP presidential candidate at this point. I won high support ratings following Prime Minister Koizumi's surprise visit to Pyongyang in 2002."

Prime Minister Koizumi won high popularity by facing off with forces of resistance, and Abe by taking a hard-line stance toward North Korea.

Then Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shotaro Yachi (currently administrative vice foreign minister) and then Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau Deputy Director-General Akitaka Saiki (currently minister to the United States) also helped Abe deal with North Korea.

Abe's close ties to Yachi and Saiki also played an important role in handling the aftermath of the firing of ballistic missiles by North Korea on July 5. Yachi swiftly contained compromising views in the Foreign Ministry, and Saiki served as a mediator between Tokyo and Washington by directly contacting US officials.

In a speech following the UN Security Council adoption of a resolution condemning the North, Abe said with confidence:

"Over the last six decades since the United Nations was established,

TOKYO 00004966 005 OF 008

Japan has never took the leadership in UNSC debate until this resolution."

The Foreign Ministry is quickly taking on Abe overtones. "We must produce results based on public opinion that has gain strength through the Koizumi administration and the ruling coalition's hard-edged policy toward China," a mid-level Foreign Ministry official commented.

Some are skeptical about Abe's "fighting diplomacy" especially in dealing with China and South Korea.

In a speech yesterday, Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono cited Japan's failed bid for a permanent UNSC seat due to stiff opposition from China and other countries:

"In Japan there is some presumptuousness, or bigoted nationalism. And this is largely blocking Japan from winning cooperation and support from other Asian countries."

A certain Foreign Ministry official also expressed wariness about "Abe diplomacy" in a small voice:

"There is a view in the Foreign Ministry that once Mr. Abe becomes prime minister, he will take pragmatic policy, moving toward the left. But one's beliefs rooted in his upbringing won't change so easily."

(3) Bush-Koizumi honeymoon alliance (Part 1): Interview with Japan Research Institute Chairman Jitsuro Terashima: Japan blindly following US, without thinking and only out of force of habit

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
August 28, 2006

-- How do you evaluate Japan-US relations over the past five years?

Thrown into frenzy by the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the United States launched military strikes on Afghanistan and then Iraq. Swept along by this new development, Japan began to think that there was no other option but to follow the US.

-- Why did Japan fall in such a state?

During the period between the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the terrorist attacks on the US, Japanese politics entered a period of strategic alliances. Under such a situation, it was impossible for Japanese politicians to sit down and discuss post-Cold War Japan-US relations. Germany fully discussed what the role of US forces in that nation should be in the new era. Germany gradually scaled down the US bases there, and it even revised the Status of Forces Agreement. In contrast, Japan faced the aftermaths of the terrorist attacks with a woeful lack of preparedness. It is only natural that Japan's stance was quite different from that of Germany.

-- Despite the lack of preparedness, Prime Minister Koizumi tilted greatly toward cooperating with the US, didn't he?

The main point is what meaning the deepening of relations with the US has for Japan. Those who are pro-Japan in the US and those who are pro-American in Japan have stressed the importance of cooperation between Japan and the US. But I think there now needs to be a reconsideration of such bilateral cooperation. I wonder if the

TOKYO 00004966 006 OF 008

state of both countries relying on each other while saying, "The Japan-US security arrangements are the permanent axis of the bilateral relationship," can be called bilateral cooperation in the real meaning.

-- Foreign Ministry officials proudly say tha the bilateral relationship is now the best ever.

Force of habit and immediate interests alone form the basis for the current cooperative relationship between Japan and the US. For the US, Japan is a convenient partner that always follows it. The Koizumi administration established close ties with the US probably from this point of view: Though it has no independent identity and has stopped thinking on its own, Japan believes it can extend that line well into the 21st century. When considering what the bilateral relations ought to be in the 21st century, however, we should be aware of the need to establish a mature relationship based on a combination of tension and cooperation and without having to rely on each other. The Japan-US alliance established by the Koizumi administration is not real.

-- Prime Minister Koizumi insists that Japan decided to dispatch Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops to Iraq on its own.

Since the end of the war, Japan has set forth the principle of keeping itself only lightly armed and focusing on becoming an economic power. The dispatch of the SDF to Iraq upset Japan's conventional stance. Japan at one time earned the respect of other countries because it was seen as a major power that had no military option. In opting to support the Iraq issue, however, Japan abandoned its independent thinking. Japan acted as if it could take any action just by changing the government's interpretation of the Constitution and not even having to go so far as to amend it. Although Japan does not need to treat the Constitution as sacred, it should not have changed the interpretation of it. Such an approach only allows other countries to see Japan as a country with no principles.

-- What role do you think Japan should play in establishing a real cooperative relationship with the US?

There are two roles Japan should play in the 21st century. One is to prevent the US from becoming isolated from Asia. Now that the international community discouragingly has witnessed the limits of what US troops dispatched to Iraq can do, Japan as its ally has to work hard to boost the value of the US in the eyes of Asia, like that of Britain in Europe. Another role is to patiently try to make China follow the rules of the international community, instead of locking horns with it. Simply put, Japan should be friendly to the US while becoming closer to Asia.

-- Prime Minister Koizumi has said that if relations with the US are in good shape, relations with other countries would also go smoothly.

For the US, a Japan that has no influence in Asia has no value. If Japan easily suggests that it and the US should jointly face off against a China threat, it will lose sight of its historic views. Although there are sources of contention between them, the US and China are conscious of the each other as champions. We should take the view that the US and China, always avoiding a fatal confrontation, are able to communicate to each other beneath the surface more than Japan and the US can.

TOKYO 00004966 007 OF 008

(4) US told Japan it would not to be asked to pay war cost, three months before the start of Iraq war

SANKEI (Top Play) (Slightly abridged)
August 30, 2006

In December 2002, about three months before the start of the Iraq war, then United States Deputy Secretary of State Armitage told Japan that it would be asked to pay any of the war costs in the event the US went into action. According to several government sources, Armitage also expressed expectations that Japan would announce its support for the war.

In the Gulf War, although Japan offered financial contributions worth about 13 billion dollars, it was hardly appreciated. The US

apparently took this bitter experience into consideration. Japan and the US also agreed not to conduct checkbook diplomacy, but Japan at that time explained that it would be impossible to dispatch Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops unless a new law were enacted.

Expectations were running high among some US government officials for SDF troops' participation in the Iraq war, as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Lawless called for Japan's "boots on the

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ground." Around that time, though, the Japanese government decided to dispatch the SDF "on a postwar reconstruction mission" so as not to let the US place excessive expectations on Japan.

From late 2002 through March in 2003, the showdown between the US and such countries as France and Germany intensified over the propriety of use of armed force against Iraq. The Japanese government was making diplomatic efforts to have a new resolution clearly tolerating the use of every possible means, including armed force, adopted at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), following Resolution 1441, warranting the use of force.

Judging that the US was likely to go into action without the second resolution in the face of strong opposition from France and Germany, the Japanese government secretly worked out measures it should take if the second resolution were not adopted.

As a result of studying restrictions under international laws, the government came up with this conclusion: Not only the second resolution but also the first resolution were not necessary for the US to launch a military operation against Iraq; Resolution 678 that warranted the use of force in the Gulf War and Resolution 687 that set conditions for a ceasefire were enough.

Although the Japanese government completed ideological weaponry in preparation for the expected war with Iraq, Japan boosted efforts to have the second resolution adopted at the UNSC, stemming from the judgment that the existence of the second resolution was politically desirable to have the public understand Japan's support.

The Japanese government paid attention to the importance of the international community's response because the fear of a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was behind the potential US-led war. Japan urged the US to make diplomatic efforts at UNSC, emphasizing the need to come up with a war between the international community and Iraq, instead of one between the US and Iraq. But the second resolution was not adopted.

Amid the standoff between the US and Europe, Prime Minister Koizumi

TOKYO 00004966 008 OF 008

suddenly announced Japan's support for the US on March 18, just before the start of the war, although diplomatic sources had anticipated Japan would make the announcement after the start of the war. A government source close to the prime minister said:

"The prime minister's decision probably stemmed from his instinct. There is no doubt that he calculated that the announcement before the start of the war would be more effective to underscore to the international community that the Japan-US alliance remained firm."

Learning about Prime Minister Koizumi's decision that night, Armitage promptly made a phone call to a senior government official, saying: "I was moved to tears. I am now happy for having been involved in Japan-US relations for many years."

Nine months later, the government decided at a cabinet meeting to dispatch SDF troops to Iraq after the end of the large-scale battle.

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